

# Meriel I. Burnett

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## Education

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### M.A., Experimental Psychology

Expected: May 2025

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

GPA: 3.9/4.00

Thesis: *"Exploring Profane and Aggressive Language in Humor with HEXACO and Dark Tetrad Personality Using Random Forests"*

Advisor: Dr. Paul. J. Silvia

### B. Psychological Sciences with Honours

2018 - 2021

Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

GPA: 3.39/4.00 ("Upper-Second Class Honours")

Thesis: *"Social Support in the Digital Age: The Relationship Between Online Perceived Social Support, Well-Being, And Loneliness"*

Advisor: Dr. Ben Williams

## Publications

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**Burnett, M. I., & Silvia, P. J.** (2024). *Funny Stuff: Predicting profanity use in creative humor production*. In progress.

Zell, E. & **Burnett, M. I.** (2024). *Transgender Knowledge Mediates U.S.*

*Political Differences in Prejudice and Support for Trans-Inclusive Policies*. Under review at Sex Roles.

## Conference Presentations

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**Burnett, M. I., & Silvia, P. J.** (2024, March 15-16). *Some Funny #@!/: Predicting profanity use in creative humor production tasks* [conference talk]. APA Division 10 Conference, Denton, Texas

**Burnett, M. I., & Zell, E.** (2023, November 4). *Ideology, Ignorance of History, and Perception of Racism* [poster presentation]. Society for Southeastern Social Psychologists (SSSP) Conference, Charlotte, North Carolina

## Skills

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*Programming languages:*

**R** (intermediate, particularly familiar with the following packages: quanteda, partykit, reticulate, caret, ggplot2, text, rparty, context, rvest. **Python** (beginner, familiar with playwright, requests), **SQL** (beginner)

*Software:*

**SPSS** (advanced but out of practice), **SQL workbench** (beginner)

**Tracking The Relationship Between Polling Swings  
and Partisans Attitudes Toward Democracy**

Aug 2024 - Present

UNC Greensboro; co-author: Dr. Aaron Beveridge

A study aiming to explore how partisan's attitudes toward the legitimacy of democracy varies as a function of the likelihood that their preferred candidate will win the US election. In progress.

**Data collection:** Web-scraped text data from social media sites.

**Data processing:** Cleaned and formatted text data, trained word embeddings model on a large corpus, computed a la carte embeddings.

**Analyses:** Conducted change-point analyses, calculated cosine distance between embeddings.

**Exploring Profane and Aggressive Language in Humor with  
HEXACO and Dark Tetrad Personality Using Random Forests**

Jan 2024 - Present

UNC Greensboro; advisor: Dr. Paul J. Silvia

A thesis aiming to identify personality factors within the HEXACO and Dark Tetrad models that predict the use of hostility and aggression in jokes. In progress.

**Data preprocessing:** Cleaned data, coded text responses for profanity and aggressive targeting using automated text analysis.

**Analyses:** Conducted 12 random forests (all combinations of 3 predictor sets and 4 outcomes), each with accompanying model fit estimates and variable importance and accumulated local effects analyses.

**Write up:** Wrote ~15000-word proposal, successfully proposed in September 2024 and to be defended by March 2025.

**Funny Stuff: Predicting Profanity Use in Creative Humor Production**

Dec 2024 – Sep 2024

UNC Greensboro; co-author: Dr. Paul J. Silvia

A study ( $n = 600$ ) on the relationship between Five-Factor personality and use of profane language in creative humor production tasks (i.e., jokes). Completed.

**Data preprocessing:** Removed long-string responses and attention-check fails, computed scales and checked internal reliability, cleaned text data, coded text responses for profanity using dictionary-based text analysis methods.

**Analyses:** Conducted a classification random forest and regression random forest (study 2), computed variable importance, accumulated local effects, model fit.

**Write up:** Wrote ~7000-word paper, about to be submitted for publication.

**Social Support in the Digital Age: The Relationship Between Online  
Perceived Social Support, Well-Being, And Loneliness**

Feb 2021 – Dec 2021

Swinburne University of Technology; advisor: Dr. Ben Williams

An honors thesis involving the development and validation of a novel scale to measure online social support, and series of regression analyses to determine whether online social support is associated with the same beneficial effects on well-being as in-person social support. Completed.

**Conceptualization/systematic literature review:** Conducted a systematic search of psychological research journals.

**Analyses:** Conducted an exploratory factor analysis and several mediated regressions.

**Write up:** Wrote ~8000-word thesis, which was awarded upper-second class honors.

## Collaboration Projects

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### Automatic Scoring of Humor with Large Language Models

Mar 2023 - Present

Pennsylvania State University and UNC Greensboro; lead investigators: Roger E. Beaty, Paul J. Silvia

A study aiming to determine the effectiveness and reliability of large language models in rating jokes for humor ability. In progress.

**Data analysis:** Assisted in training and tuning a large language model to rate creative humor production (original jokes) for funniness.

### Transgender Knowledge Mediates U.S. Political Differences in Prejudice and Support for Trans-Inclusive Policies

May 2023 –Dec 2023

UNC Greensboro; co-author: Dr. Ethan Zell

A study on the relationship between political affiliation, knowledge related to transgender health, and support for trans-inclusive policies. Completed.

**Literature review and planning:** Reviewed literature on predictors of attitudes toward transgender people and opinions on trans-inclusive policies, designed study, obtained IRB approval, entered survey into Qualtrics.

**Write up:** Wrote the original draft of the full paper, and several subsequent revisions. This paper is currently under “revise and resubmit” at Sex Roles.

## Teaching

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### Course Instructor

Aug 2024 - Present

UNC Greensboro

**PSY311L: Research Methods.** Fall 2024. Class of 25 students.

*Responsibilities:* Designing and delivering bi-weekly lectures, managing assessments and grading, holding weekly office hours.

### Teaching Assistant

Aug 2023 –June 2024

UNC Greensboro

**PSY122: Careers in Psychology.** Spring 2024.

**PSY455: Social and Personality Development.** Spring 2024.

**PSY250: Developmental Psychology.** Spring 2023.

**PSY456: Cognitive Development.** Fall 2023.

**PSY341: Adult Psychopathology.** Fall 2023.

**PSY455: Social and Personality Development.** Fall 2023.

*Responsibilities:* Attending classes and directing activities, grading assignments and exams, corresponding with students via email, holding office hours, printing and distributing study materials, tracking student participation and engagement.

#### Relevant Coursework

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**IAL620** - Text Analysis and Natural Language Processing, in progress

**STA622** – Complex Data Analysis, in progress

**ERM785** – R for Education and Social Sciences, in progress

**PSY609** – Statistical Methods in Psychology I

**PSY610** – Statistical Methods in Psychology II

**PSY401** – Advanced Quantitative Methods

#### Honors and Awards

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Summer Research Award. \$2000.

Jun 2024

Judge's Choice Award for Best Speech,

Mar 2024

APA Division 10 Student Showcase. \$200 cash prize.

UNC Greensboro Travel award. \$500.

Apr 2024

UNC Greensboro Travel award. \$500.

Nov 2023

#### Memberships and Certificates

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Member - Society for Personality and Social Psychology

Member – APA Division 10, Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts

Associate - Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (member no. 13002)

Tri-citizen of Ireland, Australia, and the United Kingdom

#### Professional Experience

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**Director of Research** (Researcher until Dec 2022)

Mar 2022 –Jul 2023

Unconventional Organisation

- Managed online magazine on ADHD, publishing one article per fortnight on topics such as recent research findings, tips on concentration and goal setting, and product recommendations
- Delivered a weekly written report on recent publications related to the treatment of ADHD (summarized 4 research papers per week, for all weeks Dec 2022 – July 2023)

- Attended weekly director meetings

**Rehabilitation Counsellor**

Jan 2022 –July 2022

Pinnacle Rehab

- Developed rehabilitation plans for individuals (clients) with psychological workplace injuries
- Worked with clients, healthcare professionals, insurance companies, and employers to evaluate relevant physical, psychological, and social factors associated with injury and rehabilitation

References

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**Dr. Paul J. Silvia**, Professor of Psychology at UNC Greensboro.

[p\\_silvia@uncg.edu](mailto:p_silvia@uncg.edu)

**Dr. Robert W. Wiley**, Assistant Professor of Psychology at UNC Greensboro.

[rwwiley@uncg.edu](mailto:rwwiley@uncg.edu)

**Dr. Aaron Beveridge**, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at UNC Greensboro.

[akbeveri@uncg.edu](mailto:akbeveri@uncg.edu)

**Dr. Ben Williams**, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Swinburne University of Technology.

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